Getting started – domain and hosting

First, you need a domain name. This is the address for your online presence, the words customers type into their browser to visit you directly.

There are guidelines covering the registration of different domain name types – known as Top Level Domains or TLDs. For example, registering a .com.au (the Australian standard TLD) requires an ABN number. The .com TLD is the most commonly used internationally but is also the local TLD for the United States. Registering a .com is easier but lacks the local appeal and is therefore more appropriate for international business. There are many other different TLDs, but the most important for Australian business is .com.au.

Your domain should reflect your registered business name. For example; if www.yourbusiness.com.au isn't available, try www.yourbusinessonline.com.au or another suitable variant. It may be advisable to register more than one related domain, pointing to the same website. This prevents someone else from registering www.yourbusiness.com and causing customer confusion should you want to expand into other territories or increase your online presence later.

To register a domain name, visit Netregistry.com.au, and use the 'domain name' search form to find out if your chosen name is currently in use. A Netregistry domain is competitively priced at $34.95, and comes bundled with levels of personal service and additional extras not found in budget deals. Once you've chosen an available domain, add it to your order with a simple click of a button.

The domain name by itself doesn't get you a website. Next, you need hosting.

Here is a simple analogy for you. If your computer was a television, the domain name would be the channel button on your remote, the hosting provider would be the television station and the host server would be the video bank playing back and broadcasting the programs you watch. Therefore, the server stores your website information and 'broadcasts' it to any internet browser that enters the domain name.

Servers can be configured to provide a number of different website solutions. You need to understand how you want your website to behave when choosing the right package.

Many websites only require static hosting. This hosting service simply stores and serves up information without changing or manipulating it. These websites are called static sites, sometimes called brochureware sites, as they work simply as online catalogues. The pages never change unless manually updated by the webmaster. A static website requires customers to contact you by email, phone or fax to order and purchase.

If you want customers to interact with the pages – leaving comments, performing searches or creating individual profiles - you need a dynamic hosting package such as Netregistry's Business Hosting service. This level of hosting allows you to add a Content Management System (CMS) to administer the site. Instead of manually updating each page, a simple interface allows you to enter new information and automatically updates the new site.

Dynamic hosting uses database technology on the server to store and process the information in pieces before assembling them into the specific pages when requested by the user.

A store hosting account like Business Hosting bundled with Payment Gateway may be the best solution if you need a shopping cart or online payment options. Equipped with an SSL Certificate to provide secure transactions, these products have been designed specifically to provide the best online selling features to increase your sales.

Netregistry hosting has been designed to provide the most stable and flexible service for Australian small business.

Building the site

Technology has developed many cheap and easy ways to get a professional website online in a short space of time.

If you only need a static site, then Netregistry's DIY SiteBuilder can help build one quickly and cheaply from high quality templates by following a simple online wizard. Attached free to all Netregistry hosting packages, DIY SiteBuilder allows you to add, move and edit the content and images of your website without needing to understand complex code.

Still, not everyone has the time, patience or design skills to create their own website. Netregistry's Advanced Website service can put together your design layout integrated with company branding and style templates tailored to your needs. You receive three specially created template designs to choose from based on your instructions. After incorporating any changes, the website will be developed for you.

Once the website is built, the newly created files can be uploaded to your hosting server by FTP (File Transfer Protocol) – a password secure method of transferring files between computers and servers to avoid unauthorised people from editing, or hacking, your website.

When the files are located on the server and your domain name is configured to point to them, any internet browser can access the files and render the web pages to view your site.

Unsure what kind of website you want? Talk to one of Netregistry's consultants. By discussing websites you like, they can help you select the right features and appropriate style for your business.

Launch and review

Even the best websites can be improved, but most first-time webmasters need to understand the myriad of common mistakes that can affect performance.

On request, Netregistry will provide a free Website Analysis, covering design, navigation and content. Discussing your new website with an experienced consultant can highlight improvements and help you to decide on the best strategy.

You should also consider how potential customers will find the website. Each year, more customers are turning to the internet to find the products and services they need. To do so, they are typing queries into search engines such as Google or Yahoo! Therefore, it is important to develop strategies to ensure you receive as much traffic as you can from these search engines as quickly as possible.

Yet, it can take months for the search engines to come across your site naturally and index it correctly. Thankfully, there are ways to get your website into Google and Yahoo results within weeks instead of months. Netregistry's GoLive service allows you to start receiving search engine traffic sooner by pointing the search engines towards your site so they find it now rather than later.

Once indexed, how you appear in the search engines and how visitors respond to your site when they find it are governed by many factors within your site. The Optimiser Report produces a detailed overview of your site, making recommendations on how the content and structure is interpreted by the search engines.

A Netregistry site review is free. A consultant will advise you on the best steps to take to achieve your specific goals.

Marketing

Getting listed in Google and Yahoo is not enough. With every search query returning thousands – if not millions – of results, how do you ensure your business isn't overlooked by everyone?

Search engines work by determining every website's relevance to the keywords entered by the user. To put it in extremely simple terms, if your website mentions pink polo shirts a few times, you will appear more relevant – and therefore much higher in the search results - for the keyword search 'pink polo shirts'.

There are two ways to use keywords to increase search engine traffic, targeting either the natural or sponsored results. Natural results are the main results that appear when using a search engine. Your website needs to appear in a high position on the first page to get noticed. This can take weeks or months, but as the ranking increases, so does search engine traffic.

The Traffic Accelerator is a search engine optimisation (SEO) service designed to provide the advice, research and ongoing support necessary to drive your website higher. By targeting the most effective keywords and phrases for your business and making the suggested changes and improvements to your website, you will rank higher in these natural results.

For more immediate search engine traffic, it may be necessary to use sponsored results, the highlighted links across the top and down the right column of the natural Google results. These mini-adverts respond to keyword phrases, just as natural results do, but because they are sponsored, their appearance is governed by how much you are willing to pay for each click a user makes on these links.

With AdManager, Netregistry can manage a detailed campaign on your behalf, placing adverts where your customers are looking whilst providing cost effective and immediate results.

Every day with low traffic is a day you lose potential sales. Don't put it off. Talk to Netregistry about boosting your search engine traffic today.

Grow your business

Once you've achieved a stronger appearance in the search engines and have begun to receive more traffic, how do you continue improving?

Email marketing is the most effective tool at your disposal to market to your existing customer base and keep them coming back. Email newsletters allow you to go direct to your best customers, building an ongoing relationship, instead of waiting for them to return to your website.

Mailroom is Netregistry's easy email marketing service, allowing you to create your own professional newsletters, administer large databases of customer addresses, while conforming to all email marketing standards. It also offers detailed reporting so you can track the success of each campaign.

Netregistry is the best online business partner you could have, with over a decade of experience in lifting large and small business customers towards online success. Netregistry delivers relevant and measurable business improvement by combining proven online strategies with our award-winning team.

Don't risk expensive and time consuming mistakes through not understanding the complexities of internet business. Talk to the experts in turning net novices into e-commerce entrepreneurs.

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